

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03
INR-10 NSAE-00 ICA-11 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03
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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8318
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
USMISSION USNATO
AMCONSUL BELFAST
AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

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USOECD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EFIN, ELAB, UK
SUBJECT: POLICE PAY INCREASES ACCEPTED BY GOVERNMENT

SUMMARY: THE GOVERNMENT HAS CARRIED OUT ITS COMMIT-
MENT TO THE UK'S 126,000 POLICEMEN BY ACCEPTING
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCREASES IN THEIR PAY OF UP TO
45 PERCENT. THE INCREASE WILL BE PHASED IN OVER TWO
YEARS, HALF IN SEPTEMBER 1978 (AFTER THE END OF THE
CURRENT STAGE OF PAY POLICY) AND THE REMAINDER A YEAR
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LATER. THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTION REFLECTS THE POLICY OF
KEEPING WITHIN THE 1977-78 PAY ROUND GUIDELINES MODIFIED
BY FORWARD COMMITMENTS TO DEAL WITH PARTICULAR CASES,
E.G. FIREMEN, UNIVERSITY TEACHERS, DOCTORS, DENTISTS, THE
ARMED FORCES, AND TOP PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES. THE
REACTION OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IS THUS FAR QUIET,
SINCE THE LEADERSHIP APPEARS TO ACCEPT

THE "UNIQUE POSITION
OF THE POLICE IN OUR SOCIETY" (REES). HOWEVER, THERE
MAY BE RUMBLINGS IN SOME RANK AND FILE GROUPS, CONVINCED
THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES MAKE THEM SPECIAL CASES. END SUMMARY.

1. THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY ON THE
POLICE (EDMUND-DAVIES REPORT), PUBLISHED JULY 17, AROSE
OUT OF THE LAST PAY ROUND'S (OCTOBER) SETTLEMENT AWARDED
10 PERCENT AND THE PROSPECTIVE BENEFITS) OF A THEN
ONGOING INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO POLICE PAY (77 LONDON
17855). THE REPORT RECOMMENDS INCREASES FOR UK POLICE
FORCES RANGING FROM 30 TO 45 PERCENT. THE RECOMMENDA-
TIONS TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE DECLINING RELATIVE POSITION
OF POLICE PAY IN PAST YEARS AS WELL AS THE LEGAL RESTRIC-
TION OF THE POLICEMAN'S RIGHT TO STRIKE. THE REPORT
ARGUES THAT THIS LIMITATION ON THEIR COLLECTIVE STRENGTH
SHOULD BE REWARDED WITH A GENEROUS INCREASE AND A PROVI-
SION FOR ANNUAL REVIEW OF WAGE RATES IN LINE WITH
"CHANGES IN AVERAGE EARNINGS IN THE PRECEDING 12 MONTHS".
THE REPORT ALSO PROVIDES FOR SETTING UP NEW NEGOTIATING
MACHINERY BETWEEN LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND POLICE REPRESENTA-
TIVE BODIES (THE MACHINERY HAD BROKEN DOWN DURING THE
BARGAINING BETWEEN THE POLICE AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES
IN THE LAST ROUND). TECHNICALLY, THE GOVERNMENT HAD
REFUSED TO TAKE OVER THE NEGOTIATIONS AS THE POLICE
FEDERATIONS HAD SOUGHT.
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2. THE GOVERNMENT'S REACTION TO THE REPORT WAS DETER-
MINED BY A SERIES OF POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS AS WELL
AS THE PRACTICAL PROBLEMS OF POLICE RECRUITMENT AND THE
NEED TO SHORE UP POLICE MORALE. THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT
THAT MRS. THATCHER INTENDS TO MAKE "LAW AND ORDER" A
CENTRAL ISSUE IN THE COMING ELECTION AND THE GOVERNMENT
WAS CONCERNED LEST ITS HANDLING OF POLICE PAY (AND THE
UNDERSTAFFING OF MOST FORCES) WERE USED AS A STICK TO
BEAT THE GOVERNMENT DURING THE CAMPAIGN. ALSO HOWEVER,
THE GOVERNMENT IS ACUTELY AWARE OF THE DELICACY OF THE
FUTURE OF ITS PAY POLICY AND THE PROBLEMS THAT ARE POSED
BY A GROWING LIST OF SPECIAL CASES (WHATEVER THE EUPHE-
MISMS THE GOVERNMENT USES). OTHER "UNIQUE" GROUPS
(DOCTORS, DENTISTS, PUBLIC SECTOR CHIEFS, FIREMEN, THE
ARMED SERVICES, AND UNIVERSITY TEACHERS) WON FROM THE
GOVERNMENT IMMEDIATE 10 PERCENT INCREASES AND AMBIGUOUS
EXEMPTIONS FROM FUTURE PAY POLICIES.

3. TRYING TO BALANCE THE PRESSURES, THE GOVERNMENT
ACCEPTED THE EDMUND-DAVIES REPORT AND DECIDED TO IMPLEMENT
THE FULL INCREASES, BUT PHASED IN TWO STAGES. THE FIRST

INCREASE WILL BE ON SEPTEMBER 1, 1978 AND THE SECOND A
YEAR LATER, WITH UPDATING IN THE FUTURE ACCORDING TO THE
COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS. THE PHASING OF THE INCREASE
(CRITICIZED BY TORIES WHO HAVE UNDERTAKEN TO IMPLEMENT
IT IN FULL IF THEY ARE ELECTED) IS AS GENEROUS AN OFFER

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AS THE GOVERNMENT COULD REASONABLY MAKE GIVEN THE
POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS. BEFORE THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE
DEAL, IT WAS WIDELY SPECULATED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD
PHASE THE INCREASES OVER THREE OR EVEN FOUR YEARS.

4. THE IMPACT OF THE DEAL ON THE FUTURE OF PAY POLICY
IS UNCLEAR, THOUGH THE GOVERNMENT SEEMS CONFIDENT THAT
THE SPECIAL TREATMENT OF THE POLICE WILL BE ACCEPTED BY

OTHER WORKERS AS BOTH NECESSARY AND EXCEPTIONAL. THIS
IMPRESSION, WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF ONE OR TWO
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RANK AND FILE GROUPS, WILL PROBABLY PROVE TO BE ACCURATE.
WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT IS THE CUMULATIVE EFFECT OF THE
UNDERTAKINGS THE GOVERNMENT HAS MADE TO VARIOUS SPECIAL
GROUPS. UNLESS THE GOVERNMENT IS PREPARED TO RISK ITS
CREDIBILITY BY DEFAULTING ON THESE UNDERTAKINGS, THERE
ARE NOW SEVEN GROUPS THAT MAY BE EFFECTIVELY EXEMPTED
FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S PAY GUIDELINES FOR 1978-79. THEY
ARE THE POLICE, FIREMEN, DOCTORS, DENTISTS, UNIVERSITY
DONS, SENIOR PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES, AND THE ARMED
SERVICES. ALL HAVE BEEN PROMISED INCREASES FAR ABOVE
THE LEVEL THE GOVERNMENT IS HOPING TO ACHIEVE FOR
AVERAGE EARNINGS OVER THE COMING WAGE ROUND. WHILE
THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL ATTEMPT
TO PREVENT THE LIST FROM GROWING, THERE ARE SOME OBVIOUS
CANDIDATES WHO WILL WISH TO ACHIEVE SIMILAR TREATMENT.
AMONG THESE GROUPS ARE THOSE WHO, THOUGH LACKING MUSCLE
AND INDUSTRIAL EXPERIENCE, DO HAVE A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF
PUBLIC SYMPATHY. PRINCIPAL AMONG SUCH GROUPS COULD BE
THE NURSES.

5. DESPITE THE POSSIBILITY OF ONE OR TWO EFFORTS TO
JOIN THE SELECT CLUB OF GOVERNMENT-SANCTIONED SPECIAL
CASES, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE OFFICIAL TRADE UNION
REACTION TO ALL THE ALLOWANCES MADE THUS FAR BY THE
GOVERNMENT WILL BE QUIET. THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT
THE LEADERSHIP OF THE UNIONS (REPRESENTED ON THE EDMUND-
DAVIES INQUIRY) WILL BE KEEN TO SANCTION COMPETITIVE
CLAIMS BASED ON THE TREATMENT RECEIVED BY THESE GROUPS.
WHETHER THIS AGREEMENT WILL BE MIRRORED BY THE RANK AND
FILE IS STILL UNCERTAIN.

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